

**NEW JERSEY  
BEST PRACTICES  
2002-2003 APPLICATION**

**Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.**

**Application Requirements:**

- RESPONSES** to the information and the statements below must be **ANONYMOUS** and **ACCURATE**. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in responding to the statements
- USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- Applications must be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used. This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.
- Keyboarded responses to all the statements below must be no more than a total of four pages. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for clarity.
- The information on page 4 and the responses** to statements must be copied on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
- The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
- The original and seven copies of the application** must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **December 15, 2002**, with the **Itemized List of District Applications** form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name
Elementary School		Dance Fusion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle School	5-8	Number of Schools with Practice <u>1</u>
Junior High School		Number of Districts with Practice
High School		Location <input type="checkbox"/> Urban/City <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban With Urban Characteristics
Other:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town <input type="checkbox"/> Rural

**Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Diversity and Equity Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages/Bilingual Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement	
	(family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

- Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
- List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,\* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
- Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
- Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

\*The 2002 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

## Best Practices

### 1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

#### Practice

The practice is a highly successful dance program, called Dance Fusion, which has been in place for over twenty years in this middle school. Developed by a now retired guidance counselor, the purpose was to foster a greater appreciation for the performing arts, encourage participation and enhance self-esteem.

#### Innovation

The program is innovative in that it includes a large number of male and female students that learn choreography, rehearse and perform in a final performance. It allows for student participation on multi-age levels and those with different athletic and cognitive abilities so that each student "shines" on stage. Dance Fusion can be described in four parts:

##### *Part 1: Teen Arts Dance Teams*

The selection process of the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade team and 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade team is based on an audition that includes a panel of judges who are experienced dancers. Many were obtained through our high school dance club.

##### *Part 2: Dance Club*

The large majority of students participate in one of a variety of dance groups: ballet, jazz, hip hop, lyrical, tap, and contemporary and traditional cultural Korean and Irish Dance. Routines are typically three minutes or less in length. There is no audition for participation in this club.

##### *Part 3: Broadway Theatre*

Students' participation includes an audition for a short Broadway Theatre number that includes both acting and dancing skills. The choreographer, the parent of a student, is also a former Tony nominee for her role in the Broadway Show, *Gypsy*.

##### *Part 4: Stage Crew*

Students volunteer to be a part of this group that helps during rehearsals and performances. They work under the direction of the dance coordinator and a crew director. Each member participates in constructing and designing scenery, acting as stagehands and learning lighting techniques through the use of both spotlight and a high-tech computer board. In addition, students' videotape school performances, edit, and present the highlights on our school TV network.'

Each dance group practices with a choreographer for an hour or so, once a week, for several months under the direction of the dance coordinator. The dance coordinator's duties include:

- selecting choreographers
- registration
- supervision of each group's choreography, music and costume selection
- stage coordination
- picture-taking and slide show presentation during final performances
- coordination of a final performance

#### Objectives

The objectives of the practice are:

1. to help students learn proper dance techniques and vocabulary
2. to provide appropriate choreography
3. to increase coordination and flexibility
4. to enhance concentration and listening skills
5. to teach grace, poise and rhythm
6. to help students attain good group and interpersonal skills
7. to incorporate cultural diversity into the middle school

8. to allow all students to show professionalism
9. to foster self-esteem through dance
10. to increase respect for the performing arts

### **High Student Achievement**

Student achievement is at the highest level in this practice. Through the use of well constructed choreography by experienced artists, students were able to learn patterns and formations of dance and follow rhythm and music changes. They discover ways to cognitively remember dance steps by using counts of eight. Students become more aware of diverse cultures by watching dancers demonstrate special skills such as Irish Tap Dance and Chang-gu (Korean traditional hourglass drum dance). Team captains are elected and leadership qualities are developed. Commitment contracts are distributed to insure devotion to the practice.

The level of performance proficiency has increased to include more challenging dance routines. "Boys" have now joined the Dance Club and auditioned and won major parts in Broadway Theatre numbers. Some boys and girls continue to train privately in dance and Broadway Theatre because of their new love for this performing art.

Our select "Teen Arts" team members go on to school-based professional competitions and have brought home many trophies and medals. They proceed in auditioning for a spot on the competitive high school dance team after graduating from middle school. More dancers from our program earn a spot on that high school team than other towns attending the same school. Many high school team dancers return to our school to choreograph bringing with them years of experience and talent.

2. **List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, \*addressed by practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.**

*The following Core Curriculum Content Standards are addressed under the New Jersey Visual and Performing Arts Curriculum Framework:*

- Standard 1.1 All students will acquire knowledge and skills that increase aesthetic awareness in dance, music, theater, and visual arts.**
- Standard 1.2 All students will refine perceptual, intellectual, physical, and technical skills through creating dance, music, theatre, and/or visual arts.**
- Standard 1.3 All students will utilize arts elements and arts media to produce artistic products and performances.**
- Standard 1.4 All students will demonstrate knowledge of the process of critique.**
- Standard 1.5 All students will identify the various historical, social, and cultural influences and traditions which have generated artistic accomplishments throughout the ages and which continue to shape contemporary arts.**
- Standard 1.6 All students will develop design skills for planning the form and function of space, structures, objects, sound and events.**

Students demonstrate an increase of aesthetic awareness, refinement of perceptual, intellectual, physical and technical skills, and demonstrate knowledge of critique through rehearsals, direct feedback from choreographers and performance skills.

(CCCS1.1, 1.2, 1.4)

Students involved with stage crew utilize arts elements and arts media to produce colorful scenery, objects, movable stage designs, sound and light elements. (CCCS 1.3, 1.6)  
All students develop a respect for various historical, social and cultural influences and traditions with the addition of cultural music, costumes, and dance forms such as Korean Dance and Irish Tap Dance. (CCCS 1.5)

*The Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards are:*

**Standard 2: All Students will use information, technology, and other tools.**

The practice addresses this standard by affording the stage crew the opportunity to use information and technology with lighting, backstage design and videotaping and editing skills. Some student dancers cut and edit their own music onto a compact disc. (WPRS#2)

**Standard 3: All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.**

Student dancers gained confidence when offering suggestions and solving problems with lack of space, timing, and positioning. Many dancers are asked to create their own movements in sections of the choreography. Stage crew used critical thinking skill when designing light schemes and scenery changes. Prop additions such as a "balloon drop" and rigs for movable scenery challenged each crew member. (WPRS#3)

**Standard 4: All Students will demonstrate self-management skills.**

Students learned a great deal about how much they could accomplish in a short period of time. This year's practice was completed in only nine weeks. Students worked cooperatively and accepted criticism. They were expected to attend all rehearsals, display good work habits such as responsibility and reliability. Through hard work, dedication and commitment, the feeling of accomplishment was overwhelmingly positive.

**Standard 5: All students will apply safety principles.**

Student dancers immediately learned the need for a proper warm-up which included extensive stretching exercises prior to each practice. Demonstration of safe movement techniques was displayed by all choreographers. Stage crew also used safety principles when handling scenery. (WPRS#5)

**3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.**

This practice is highly effective in meeting the educational needs of the students. Many gain invaluable experiences that not many middle schools can offer. Through vigorous practices and rehearsals, students can hone skills that will give them an advantage in future performing endeavors. All students learn to work cooperatively with respect and discipline. Many are exposed to a plethora of creative elements that made up this performing arts practice. Students gain an admiration and deeper understanding of diverse cultures and traditions.

The success of this practice has been evidenced over the years. All students are recognized before their peers in a formal school performance and before parents, family and friends in an evening final performance. Student interest was astonishing and with each successive year, the number of participants has grown to include over 100 dancers, 20 stage crew members and several musicians. Students are awarded certificates of participation and participation "points" each year. Points are accumulated for special recognition during the eighth grade graduation ceremony.

All Eighth grade students pass a district-mandated written "dance test" with 97% proficiency. This test requires students to recognize dance styles and vocabulary. It is given during physical education classes each year along with a physical assessment activity.

Community response has been incredible. Many parents volunteer to help with sewing, painting and supervising. The Senior Citizens of the town have donated their facilities for our groups, and have attended our shows. Dance Fusion was taken "on the road" to the elementary school for a performance, which was very well received. Dancers use this performance to rehearse before a live audience and gain self confidence. All students learned to "adapt" to a smaller stage and how to deal with "nervousness." Many young students wrote letters in Language Arts classes praising our performances which provided great feedback for the performers. The principal, superintendent and Board of Education members all support this practice.

#### **4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school district.**

Replication of this practice can be successfully completed in any school district in either of two ways:

1. Choreographers can be found in neighboring high schools and contracted on a voluntary basis. In the past, many received community service hours and letters of recommendation for college applications. Other choreographers can be found in nearby communities. Students can provide their own simple costumes, props and music can be borrowed, and scenery supplies can be donated. In this manner, costs remain low. Parents would also be asked to assist if needed.
2. Connections can be made with the town recreation commission to assist with space, facilities, supervision and coordination of large school groups. A small registration fee can be added to form a budget to help offset higher-scaled production costs and to pay professional choreographers if needed.

Both of these practices have successfully been employed in this middle school. A tremendous amount of hard work and preparation goes into this practice each year. It truly is the envy of many surrounding schools.

##### **Guidelines for Replication:**

1. Secure approval of the administration and decide which method (above) would work well in the school.
2. Survey the students for interest and talent and special cultural dance talents.
3. Work with staff members to determine available rehearsal space and use of stage.
4. Determine length of practice and a performance date.
5. In establishing the Select dance team and Broadway Theatre group, provide experienced judges, judging procedure and an audition.
6. Hold a sign-up for stage crew members and explain duties and work on scenery.
7. Obtain commitment from choreographers. Number of choreographers are determined by student interest. Size of group should be based on size of stage area. Limit group size. Smaller groups work well (12-14) Vary dance styles to include several popular dance forms such as jazz and ballet. Choreographers can be found in high schools, in neighborhoods and in the dance community.
8. Check all choreography for appropriate dance movements and music for lyrics.
9. Send home a commitment contract with rules and guidelines.
10. Form groups and assign practice times and space.
11. Have each group of dancers vote upon two reliable captains to assist coordinator.
12. Attendance must be taken during each class by the choreographer.
13. Costumes can be decided upon by each group.
14. Determine dance order, develop a written program and coordinate show